



## SHORT CONFERENCE The countryside's image

### Observations and trends

#### The profile

Neo rural or neo urban ? Nowadays newcomers in the countryside are greatly influenced by the culture and city way of life that they left behind. They integrate a rural lifestyle, but continue to demand the sort of services that are available in cities.

These population movements to rural areas mean that the countryside is becoming "gentrified". This situation is caused by the upper classes that chose to live in the country in order to improve their way of living. They are the new consumers of rural life.

Cultural creativeness is another neo profile which is characterised by a strong desire to change lifestyles by moving. Their impression of the countryside is based on the culture and impact that it can have on the environment. They often aim to be sociable by creating social links.

Business people (craftsmen, shopkeepers, and other independent businesses) have a more traditional view of the countryside. It is often the case that territories need them, and they are therefore easily accepted.

Lastly the majority of migrants don't fall into any category. These different profiles make up **the countryside's strong sociological composition.**

#### The motivations

The principal motivation for any move is the desire for an improved lifestyle, back to nature. People therefore look for ground or a building that is not expensive. This is illustrated by the increasing number of housing estates. Progressively people are living in rural, but built up areas. They consequently have to travel a long way to get to work and there is little or no public transport. Due to the increase in petrol prices these newcomers are at risk of becoming poorer, especially if they have not paid off their houses. Taking these changes into consideration, it would be wise to build houses nearer work places.

Nowadays, national public policies no longer contribute to the development of territories; they contribute to its eradication. At the moment there are more and more public services closing down, such as Post offices, courts health services, and SNCF train stations, whereas considering the huge cost of transporting men and merchandise, it would be judicious to keep them. Locally, politicians try to oppose these actions by supporting firm reception policies that take into account rural development and its strong modifications.



## The challenge

This return to the land is considered as a way of seeking refuge, and aiming to be self sufficient (increase of private gardens, ecologically friendly houses). Usually people living in the country know how to make everything (self sufficient), yet more and more people are wondering how independent they really are, how free are they ? This appeal of the countryside changes its image, it is seen as a way of getting to know people differently, be ecologically friendly, eating healthier and increased mobility. In short, in a world where consumption, and not self sufficiency, is encouraged, **is another way of life possible in the countryside** using the proximity of people and property as an advantage ?

The question of the countryside's future evokes another question, that of our society's future in general. **The rural world is maybe an experimental area for another kind of development, and another way of thinking.**